

SCS SB 1 -- COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

SPONSOR: Cunningham (Kelly, 24)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 13 to 0.

This substitute changes the provisions of Section 162.069, RSMo, regarding communications between school district employees and students as they were passed in SCS SB 54 in 2011 as follows:

(1) Changes the date by which a school district must adopt a written policy concerning employee-student communication from January 1, 2012, to March 1, 2012;

(2) Repeals provisions defining specified terms as they are used in the section; prohibiting the establishment, maintenance, or use of a work-related Internet site by a teacher if the site is not open to school administrators and parents; and prohibiting a teacher from establishing, maintaining, or using a non-work-related Internet site which allows exclusive access with a current or former student; and

(3) Repeals the provisions requiring specific elements to be included in the policy but requires the policy to include the use of electronic media and other mechanisms to prevent improper communications between staff members and students.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2012, FY 2013, and FY 2014.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that although many reports of what SB 54 would have required were based on "worst possible case" scenarios, differing interpretations of one subsection were possible, so correction is required. The bill leaves the substance of the required policy up to each district, which is appropriate because as the employer of teachers and other staff members, the district will be able to address what is proper and improper communication according to its own standards. By removing references to specific technology that may become dated, the bill should remain relevant longer.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Kelly (24) for Senator Cunningham; Missouri State Teachers Association; Missouri National Education Association; Missouri School Boards Association; and Missouri AFL-CIO.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.